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THE TRUE ESTIMATE OF MEN A POWERFUL MOTIVE FOR THEIR EVANGELIZATION.*

"HONOR all men."—1 PETER 2: 17.

Two grand objects, yet blending together, stimulate us in the missionary work. They are the glory of God, and the salvation of men. And from these come the influential motives to the efficient prosecution of that work. The Infinite Being we would glorify in a faithful obedience to his commands, is ever before us. We endure as seeing Him who is invisible. We have a profound sense of his majestic and loving nearness. It inspires a reverential fear, and a sweet and blessed confidence. That we may do the pleasure of our God, that we may ever vindicate his honor and authority, that we may advance and defend his kingdom.

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against all obstacles and assailants, is a supreme and governing principle of our renewed nature. The great I AM sends us to our work, and holds us to it by obligations the most sacred; and because HE IS, and is what he is, we feel bound both submissively and affectionately to do his will. I am the Lord thy God that hath brought thee up from the thralldom of sin to the privileges of salvation, therefore execute my pleasure. This is an all-controlling motive with us; and we lay ourselves upon the altar of God. We pledge supreme honor to him.

But the text summons us to another duty, and suggests another motive that, if not equally high and commanding, is nevertheless of immeasurable importance and weight. This duty is as imperative as any other. We are enjoined in the same breath to "Fear God," and to "Honor all men." We look along the lines of thought, even beyond the pathways of the stars, and the homes of angels, to the dwelling-place of Him who inhabiteth eternity, and from thence survey the wondrous glories of his kingdom, and it is easy for a devout mind both to fear and honor God. But as we gaze from that holy height, downward to the low level of our race in its fatal apostasy and reeking corruption, its consuming sins and appalling crimes—ah! what do we find to honor? What to inspire and call forth the high sentiments involved in that term? It is easy—it is a pleasure to honor some men. Their endowments, their attainments, and especially their exalted Christian virtues, elicit for them the praise of all the good, and justify an "everlasting remembrance." They are lifted up in our hearts' noblest impulses. We joy to count them worthy. But here is the divine command that bids us make no exceptions. "All men" are counted in for this distinction. As if such a sweeping declaration—so radical, so oppugnant to human practices—were liable to be misunderstood, it is specially guarded and cleared of doubt by the immediate context. The inspired Apostle says: "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." There is no mistaking the import of these terms. And what a world of thought, and duty, and obligation is contained in these few and brief injunctions! How suggestive they are of our relative positions and the responsibilities hence arising! Reverence for the Divine Being—loyal regard for the civil authority—affection for Christ's disciples—and high, manly respect for human beings as such, every where, and without exception. Is not the last—placed by inspiration first—a "hard saying"?

In this exciting time of great follies and crimes, and stupendous revolt and wickedness—of violated oaths, and shameful treason, and willful perversion of truth and justice—there are some whom it has been our delight to honor, that we must now regard with the pitying lamentation: "How are the mighty fallen!" Our regard for those generally engaged in a conspiracy to overthrow our

government and institutions, is certainly lessened, if not changed to some other sentiment by no means flattering to them. And there is danger that, in the scenes that may soon transpire—if battle-fields, with their terrible accompaniments of death and carnage, are to be multiplied, which God forbid—we shall come to place a still lower estimate on human life, and more and more fail of our duty as enjoined in the text. But this duty remains, universal and perpetual, solemnly enjoined by our Divine Father and loving Saviour, in the face of all that is revolting and repelling in human character and conduct; in all the sad developments of human destiny, wretchedness and woe. Of these we see enough around us, amid the highest Christian civilization of the world, to make angels weep and demons rejoice. And if our observation could embrace the mighty masses of heathendom, in all their tyrannies and idolatries and heaven-defying vileness, we should shrink appalled from the enlarged vision, and utterly fail of terms to express the degeneracy and abominations of our race.

But here is the duty to honor all men—a divine ray of hope beaming out over the dark, dead waste of humanity—a duty which, if properly understood and felt, would be most influential in the evangelization of our race. This duty Christianity imposes. It is the offspring of the Gospel, preëminently full of its principles and spirit. Not from oracles uninspired—not from sages and philosophers of lands without God and the Bible—not from the maxims of the schools in golden ages past—not from the lips of the wise and great of this world—comes such a sentiment, such a requisition as that of the text. This is the teaching of our holy religion in distinction and practical opposition to the sentiment and conduct of the world. Honor the great, the wise, the rich, the powerful; but trample on the feeble, enslave the conquered, despise the inferior—this has been the prevailing sentiment among men, and is now where Christianity has not wrought a change in society. The Gospel breaks down every barrier, and makes every man our neighbor, claiming the respect due to a human being and accountable creature of God. Even the degraded, the vicious, the far heathen, powerfully appeal to us in this Gospel duty. And if we should feel as we ought the value of human beings, and as they are divinely estimated, it would certainly be an influential motive in efforts for their evangelization.

I invite your attention to some of the reasons of this duty enjoined in the text.

I. The common parentage of all men urge it. All have the same high birth—the same original royal ancestry. Amidst the national, social, and conventional differences among men, this essential truth should never be forgotten. However wide and marked these differences may appear—however unlike each other various

nations and races seem to be, they can not obliterate the fact of man's common origin. We often see as great an unlikeness—as wide a dissimilarity in personal appearance, or mental and moral characteristics—in the members of a family. I know the truth of a common origin for the human race is humiliating to some, distasteful to a few, and repudiated by others, among whom are a small number of considerable eminence in physical science and ethnological studies. But they have not been able to establish their theories of a plurality of races springing from different and independent creations at the first. And still more absurd are the attempts to show that the origin of human beings is not from a single pair created by God, but from a process of development from inferior animals or even vegetables. It would seem that the defenders of the latter folly were themselves in the transmigratory process, and yet below the human standard.

Divine Revelation interposes an insuperable barrier to all these wild and foolish speculations. At its commencement it states the question in a clear light, and near its close settles it, as the chief Apostle in his sublime discourse at Mars' Hill boldly declares, that God who made the world and all things therein, also "made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; for in him we live and move and have our being, as certain of your own poets have said; for we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device." This inspired utterance contradicts every theory that denies man's common origin from the hand of his Divine Maker. And as every man, the meanest as well as the grandest, has such a high original birth and parentage, he is entitled on that account to the regard required—an honor due to a human being linked to us by the common ties of humanity. This tie of a common blood, of which God hath made all men, would not exist in the theories alluded to, nor the obligation of the text have its force. The brotherhood of humanity brings us into sympathy with the race, and is a powerful reason why we should honor all men, acknowledging their claims, in efforts for their well-being and salvation, founded on the universal law that requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. There are common feelings, susceptibilities, trials, and sufferings, which are found every where, no matter how remote or different one nation or tribe may be from another. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." I am a man, and can not help feeling an interest in what pertains to man every where, said a Latin poet who recognized this universal bond of sympathy.

I am a man, we may add, and I see a brother in every man, whom I am bound to respect and honor, because we are alike the offspring of God our Father, because he is no less a human being than myself, no matter where or in what condition he is found. He is a rational creature of God, with the same susceptible nature, the same kind of capabilities for enjoyment or suffering—whether he be the fair Caucasian or the sable Ethiopian, whether he be the dwarfish Esquimaux or the giant Patagonian, whether he be learned and refined, or only an untutored son of the forest—all are made of one blood, all have their fatherhood in God, and should therefore receive the honor demanded by a parentage thus mutual and glorious, and requiring us to be a brother's keeper in the promotion of his highest welfare.

II. The fact that all are involved in common apostasy is another reason for the duty enjoined in the text. Not one of our race has escaped the effects of the fall. All of human born—the child that knows not good from evil, that dies before it commits a sin, and is saved, yet in its sufferings and death experiences the effect of sin; the aged, beginning to sink under the infirmities attending the decay of vitality—the most amiable and lovely in the circle of home and its affections, as well as those of the very opposite cast and character, feel alike the stupendous shock. “The trail of the serpent is over them all.” Not that all are depraved in the same degree—not that all are sinners to the same extent and sunk equally deep in guilt—not this; but as the Bible expresses it: “All have gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” “Wherefore, as by one man, sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” All are together children of the dust, and are alike going down to the grave. The portal of death must be passed by all—as well the rich as the poor—as well the lofty as the low. You could not despise even a degraded and wretched human being in the solemn reality and severe agony of death, because such an experience will some time be yours. Neither should you look with unfeeling contempt upon a living victim of vice and suffering. Your heart, your susceptibilities were similar to his; and had you been placed in his circumstances, under the same influences and subject to the same exposures, it is possible that you might have fallen to the same depth of sin and sorrow. Not that he is not guilty for every sin he has committed, and deserves punishment for every wrong act; but the temptations that overcome him might have been too powerful for you to resist. How unbecoming then to look upon him with other than feelings of pity, and a regardful interest and earnest solicitude for his recovery. Is he going direct to perdition—to utter shipwreck and eternal ruin? So are you unless you have taken refuge in

the Cross of Christ; and though you may not walk in the gutter and filth of the broad way to destruction as he does, yet, if unconverted, you are somewhere in that way, and will reach the same destination with him, unless you repent. If you are a redeemed believer, and in the narrow path to heaven, it is God, his boundless mercy and sovereign grace, that has made you to differ from that wicked and abandoned wretch. Therefore you can not despise him in the condition and the prospect of a doom that might have been and deserved to be your own.

Men in their natural state, however great and renowned, however wise and powerful, and deservingly admired and honored, are yet but as magnificent ruins, stately columns and temples, prone and rent, upon which we look with veneration and awe. Each is as a monarch disrowned, his scepter broken, his robes torn and scattered; yet the fragments that remain suggest the glory of the original investiture. But as human beings, the offspring of God, are not the obscure, the illiterate, the degraded, like the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, great, surprising, traced with the lines of a mysterious history, but buried from public view? Bring up the man made in the divine image, exhume his faculties, reveal the marred grandeur of his nature, and how much inferior is he to the other? The first is like the stupendous and fragmentary memorials of Thebes, Athens, and Rome, more above ground and obvious in their mournful glory; while the second is like the vast and imposing relics of the buried cities, hidden and unobserved. But the greatness of the ruins is there notwithstanding, and as intrinsically deserving of regard and deference as the former. Therefore honor all men; for human nature is the same every where, and its elevations here and depressions there are not dissimilar things, like the gold and the clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image, but only variations as of the same portion of the earth's crust or surface, now rising to a magnificent mountain, the source of healthful airs and crystal springs, and then sinking away to a dismal marsh where hateful reptiles breed and pestilential vapors rise.

III. The fact that all men are immortal, entitles them to the honor that Divine Revelation declares to be their due. This mysterious, wonderful, sublime, and awful element—**IMMORTALITY**—this astonishing gift, this amazing endowment, is the grand heritage, the priceless possession, the unspeakable destiny of every human being! Not merely the great and good—the mighty names embalmed in the pages of inspiration—the heroes and philosophers of the past—the eminent scholars and statesmen of the present—but the dense masses of men, the vast crowds that throng the thoroughfares of the world, and dot its whole surface with life and activity, and the miserable multitudes that jostle along the avenues

of ignorance and degradation, or that fester and rot in the way-stations and by-places of vice and crime—all are alike immortal, carrying with them, bearing about wherever they are found, wherever they go, that spark of life inextinguishable, that God-given gem indestructible, that mysterious, divinely-breathed soul that is to survive the decay of death, make the transit of its isthmus, go up to its Creator for judgment, launch out on the shoreless ocean, and explore the interminable depths of an unending futurity! How does such a thought, if we begin to realize it, show the original dignity of human nature, the magnitude of its melancholy fall, and the grandeur of its mournful ruins! The intrinsic value of such a nature, the true worth of a human soul, a thing marred and broken though it be, who can estimate? How immeasurably does man rise above every other creature of God we have seen! We look upon the works of Jehovah—the beautiful creations of the material world—the lovely blossoms that greet us with smiles and fragrance—the venerable forests that nod to the breeze—the stars that seem to shine forever in the coronet of heaven—the great and wide seas, symbols of infinite majesty and power—the vast globe itself, careening through ceaseless cycles—but all these are not, like the humblest human being, immortal. Even the gift of conscious life is not theirs. They shall perish and pass away; but his soul shall survive, shall live on, eternally. It might, it may, it was fitted to live in glory with its God.

"O grandest gift of the Creator! O largess worthy of a God!
Who shall grasp that thrilling thought, life and joy forever?
Yea, where God hath given, none shall take away."

In view of such a fact, under the solemn impression of such a truth, how should we look upon man, upon ourselves, upon our fellow-beings about us, upon a world spread out before us! An infant in its cradle, helpless, and like a tender bud among the flowers, but inclosing a soul-gem, must be an object of unspeakable interest to angels, and is worthy of honor from us that nothing material in the universe can claim. You do not wonder then that the mind of the young missionary mother, under a sweet, poetic sensibility, and the higher inspiration of holy faith, should sing of her "bird with the immortal wing:"

"A silent awe is in my room;
I tremble with delicious fear;
The future, with its light and gloom—
Time and eternity are here."

Can we regard human nature thus mysteriously, grandly, and surpassingly endowed, even in its humblest and lowest forms, with other than emotions of reverence and awe? That ignorant and unsightly being that you chance to meet, is the possessor of a soul

that can not cease to exist. That wicked wretch who hates you and your religion, is immortal. That repulsive creature whose disposition and character you abhor, and whose person you are tempted to despise, and almost would annihilate if you could, is destined as well as you to live somewhere in the universe of God forever. O stupendous idea! and how does it enhance and exalt the value of man, and give him claims upon us that we can not deny! We detest and loathe the character of the vicious, but their immortal nature we can not despise. As in mining districts the unpolished fragmentary rock, the useless sand, and the besmearing lump of earth have within them the precious ore, the silver, the gold, the diamond, and are therefore of great value; so in every depraved, polluted, shattered, and perishing human form, whose very presence it may be is loathsome and pestilent, there dwells imprisoned, and though defaced, marred, stained, and crimsoned with guilt, an unspeakably precious, living, susceptible, imperishable, immortal thing!

IV. In the discharge of the duty enjoined, we do but imitate our heavenly Father, who has honored man in what he has done for his happiness, his recovery, and salvation. We can not fathom the depths of the divine wisdom; we can not solve the profound mysteries of Providence, in its determinations and allotments; but we have evidence from the works of creation, and from the teachings of inspired truth, of God's distinguishing regard for the human race. The high endowment of which I have just spoken, the conferring of an immortal nature upon man—with freedom of moral action to give it scope and grandeur—the original position and surrounding beatitudes in which God placed him—his Eden home and a pure and perfect world to dwell in and rule over—the thousand sources of happiness and pleasure presented in the outward creation then and now—and all those beautiful, attractive, and enrapturing objects which nature unfolds in scenes of inimitable loveliness and grandeur, in productions of enchanting interest and beauty, which none of the innumerable creatures that dwell on the earth, that fly through air, or swim in the sea, can appreciate or enjoy—do conclusively and wondrously evince the divine regard for man. They are all made for him, for his eye to look upon, for his mind to admire, for his heart to take pleasure in. For him continents and oceans take their bounds, mountains are lifted up, and plains spread out, rivers roll and lakes reflect the heavens. For him the seasons, freighted with countless ministries and bounties, come and go, celestial bodies move, and the forces of nature toil; and to him are offered in all their affluent profusion the revealed and hidden treasures lodged in the crust of the earth.

But over and above all material sources of delight and satisfac-

tion, look at the higher, diviner, and more astonishing provisions of Jehovah's bounty. Contemplate the scheme for man's recovery from the fall, his salvation from sin, the elevation of his nature to the dignity of a divine affinity, and its investiture with the glories of heaven. Look upon God's unspeakable gift, bestowed in virtue of his great love, and honoring—how much!—the recipient race. That divine gift—God himself manifest among men, infinite to pity and mighty to save—how did it appear? in what form was it revealed? It was God in the tabernacles of men, but not in the visible form by which he is recognized in heaven; not in a figure of angel loveliness and beauty; not in some new and unknown manifestation corresponding to our ideas of the divine holiness and majesty, but in human nature, the seed of Abraham, the form of a servant, a man among men, yet God in reality, in wisdom, perfection, love, and power. How was human nature honored and exalted in the divine incarnation? How is it possible for Jehovah to show his regard for man in a more striking, beneficent, and glorious manner?

Bad as our nature is in its fall and ruin, Jesus did not scorn to assume it, and wear it from infancy to manhood, and do in it his works of mercy and power, and bow with it in the garden, and die in it on the cross, and go with it into the darkness of the tomb, and thence rise with it in triumph, and ascend to heaven with it, while he still wears it on the throne of intercession and dominion, all glorious in the imperishable splendors of the source and substance of immortality. And in all this he has opened the gate of life and of heaven for the recovery and salvation of man, the humblest as well as the loftiest, the bruised and scarred by sin, if they will receive his mercy and follow him to those celestial heights and joys. O brethren! does it not become us to honor those whom God has honored, whom Christ has thus shown his regard for, and in reference to whom, in the Gospel view, there is so much to claim our respect and sympathy, our toils and sacrifices for their deliverance from sin, their divine enlightenment and evangelization, their blessed enfranchisement and final glorious coronation under the kingdom of redemption.

"So Jesus looked on dying men,
When throned above the skies;
And 'mid the embraces of his God,
He felt compassion rise.

"On wings of love the Saviour flew,
To raise us from the ground,
And made the riches of his blood
A balm for every wound."

V. And finally, our duty in this regard may be urged in view of the capability of all men for angelic excellence and dignity. Not that all will attain to this high and glorious state; for many

there are with all the means necessary to reach it, and under the most favoring influences to make those means effectual, who nevertheless fail; but their failure is the result of their own wicked neglect and choice. The Gospel, wherever preached or known, offers its rich provisions to all—its invitations, its promises, its inducements, are presented to all alike, and every one who believes the Gospel, trusts in the Saviour it reveals, and lives according to its precepts, shall share in its redeeming grace, its immortal honors. High or low, learned or ignorant, king or subject, master or servant, Christian or heathen, every one who accepts of salvation in God's method of grace, shall rise to angelic excellence and dignity and glory—he “shall be equal to the angels.” Such is the high destiny of our ransomed humanity. “If any man serve me,” said Jesus, “him will my Father honor.”

We see a poor, wretched, miserable wreck of a human being, apparently lost to his friends, and to society, and to every thing good, by his sins and vices; but still he is not beyond the recovering grace of the Gospel of Christ. Even he may be reached and rescued, though in the clutches of Satan at the very portal of hell—he may be reclaimed, renewed, saved, and made a king and priest unto God. Oh! how many we see, as we look over the field of moral vision, bearing the token of perdition; and then the heathen world, nation after nation, tribe after tribe, soul after soul, without hope and without God, a dismal, guilty, and doomed procession, on the terrible death-march. Ah! what

“—— sounds as they tread,
Ho! ho! how they step
Going down to the dead!
Every stride, every tramp,
Every footfall is nearer;
And dimmer each lamp,
As darkness grows drearer!”

And yet they might be saved through the Gospel of Christ, and entering the path of life, “return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.” How interesting is human nature, how mysteriously sublime and precious, in view of such a fact, or even its possibility! And how different from any thing like contempt should be our emotions in looking upon a human being, however degraded, who is capable of such a reverse in his circumstances—of rising to such a height of glory and honor and immortality! Companions of seraphs and heavenly harpers, in the mansions of the blessed, there are many who were among the chief of sinners in this world—among the depraved, and wretched, and lost here; but to whom the Gospel came as the wisdom and power of God, which they believed and embraced, regarding it a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save such sinners. Having

washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they are now among the pure, the ransomed, and rejoicing immortals; though once, perhaps, looked upon here with scorn and contempt.

Once a proud set of self-righteous persons complained to Jesus of a sinning one, whom they despised and would have condemned, when he, not palliating her guilt, by a word convicted them as equally worthy of condemnation, and made them feel their own shame, and then spoke kindly to her that she sin no more. The Prodigal Son, to whom no one would give husks to eat, in returning to his father, is greeted with warmest affection, clothed with the best robe, and welcomed to a joyous feast. It would have been folly for the rich man to look with disdain upon the begging and bruised Lazarus lying at his gate, in view of the astonishing reverse so soon to be realized in their conditions and experiences. It was foolish for the presumptuous Pharisee to despise the poor publican as he bowed in penitential prayer. In God's estimation the last was first and the lowest highest. We have often seen exemplifications of the Gospel's power to reclaim the vicious and recover the lost. The fountain of Jesus' blood—Oh! what cleansing efficacy is there!

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day."

See what the Gospel has done for heathen converts. How many Africaners and Kothabus it has lifted up from the depths of wickedness to the heights of salvation. This capability in man, in even the vicious and outcast, for recovery through grace in Christ, stamps poor human nature with an interest and value, and gives it a claim upon our sympathy and regard, that we have scarcely begun to realize. The most degraded, ignorant, and profane wretch that comes under our observation, may, for aught we know, become a subject of redeeming mercy, a trophy of sovereign grace, that shall be a resplendent gem in the Saviour's crown, and rise to a higher seat in heaven than we. Yes, he may ascend those heights which it is possible some of us will never reach. Therefore, honor all men, have a proper regard for human souls; for incarnate devils may be cast out, and "angels unawares," be such in reality at last. There is nothing too hard for God. "Him that cometh unto me," said Jesus, "I will in no wise cast out." "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Ay, this is a great salvation, realized in the destiny of the believer, and as viewed from the side of those who neglect it and perish. Oh! to sin, to reject Jesus, to die impenitent and hopeless, to lose the soul, to be damned forever—terrible doom for a ruined immortal to experience! Capacities and means for heavenly enjoyment, but all perverted.

How the course and condition of such excite our pity and not our contempt! Oh! we would honor or regard them with deepest solicitude; we would do them good; we would save their souls; for we and they must go alike to the grave, and stand in the same judgment at the bar of the Eternal.

Such I conceive to be some of the reasons for the duty enjoined in the text and required by the very spirit of the Gospel, which commands us, as we have opportunity, to do good to all men. If this duty and obligation were fulfilled, what blessed practical results would follow. This true estimate of men would be a powerful motive for their evangelization.

1. How would crimes against humanity cease? Pervaded by a sense of their intrinsic value and the honor that is their due, how would men hesitate and be restrained from the perpetration of those enormities against their fellow-creatures which now blacken the pages of history, and have made such havoc and desolation and sorrow in human abodes. Let such wicked doers see that their crimes are not only against God but against souls made in his image, against natures that are immortal, whose scars and polluting touch they may wear forever, the work of their iniquities and the evidence of their guilt and condemnation—let them hear the voice of God in the text, and would not a paralysis silence the tongue of slander, falsehood and calumny, and seize the uplifted hand of insolent oppression, of wanton injury, of rebellious or revengeful violence?

2. Carry out this Christian requirement, and how would injustice and dishonesty cease among men, and in what important respects would society be remodeled! What aid, and sympathy, and fraternal regard would be shown in human intercourse, in business, and social relations, instead of deceit and fraud, knavery and outrages of every kind. The Gospel inculcates the sentiment of the text to strike at, and uproot, and banish all such evils from human society. What changes it would produce! What senseless and unchristian distinctions it would annihilate! Some of the high would go down, and some of the low would come up. How would shackles fall, and chains drop, and barriers disappear, while here and there some who go free would feel the restraints of justice, according to a more righteous adjustment of human interests and relations, and a juster equality among men.

3. On this principle, how would all humane institutions be sustained and multiplied! What sympathy for the unfortunate! What help for the needy! What relief for the distressed! Who would be neglected? Who would unnecessarily suffer under the control and guidance of such a beneficent and Christian spirit? The complaint would no longer be heard: "No man cared for my soul."

4. If we fully understood and endeavored to act on this great

principle, what a higher, nobler estimate we should place upon a human soul, wherever it is found. Its value, how great! Its interests, how overwhelming! In a just regard for the souls of others, we should have a better idea of the unspeakable preciousness and high destiny, the perils or hopes of our own. The soul's conversion, its salvation, that of our own or of others, would rise to a matter of infinite concern, and we should better realize the force of the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and see the searching pertinence of that solemn inquiry: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Ah! we should then look upon men around us as so many souls standing on the verge of an eternal state. We should forget the material drapery, the perishable and fading form, and seem to see the immortal spirit in its relation to God and the world to come. The hurrying crowds that we meet in the street, in the thoroughfares of business and travel, would seem to us to be hastening along the way of life or of death, to eternal glory or everlasting shame. And to the one we should say: On, brothers, the heavenly portal awaits you; and to the others: Pause, friends, turn ye, for why will ye die? We should see in the long lines of our armies moving to the field of action for the defense of constitutional liberty, the solemn marching of so many souls to battles of sublimer significance, and issuing in victories or defeats measured and felt by the ages of eternity. And our wish, and prayer, and word would be: O patriot! fail not to be a good soldier of the cross under the Great Captain of our salvation! And we should see, as if looking from some height with spirit-vision over the world, in the regions beyond the pale of Gospel light, vast populations of souls sweeping on in darkness and sin to the bar of God, and the doom of the lost. And our earnest desire and supplication would be, that over this dark field of view might fly the apocalyptic angel, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to those kindreds of earth.

5. And lastly, in bringing our duty up to the obligation of the text, how would efforts be multiplied for the diffusion of the Gospel—for the evangelization of the nations! The number of missionaries would increase. Funds for their support would be vastly augmented. We should catch the spirit of Jesus, who knowing what was in man, what an immortal nature, what capabilities of joy and sorrow, came "from the highest throne of glory to the cross of deepest woe," to seek and to save the lost. There would be an overwhelming force in the Redeemer's last command, and we should fly to its execution, using whatever agencies and instrumentalities were available and adapted to reach and save the souls of men. There is no honor we can confer upon men so high and so glorious, as to give them the Gospel of Christ. We thus give

them the means of deliverance from all evil and sorrow. We let down to their abodes of death the ladder by which they may ascend to life, and rise to the dignity of a royal priesthood. We lead them to the possession of a kingdom that can not be moved, and a crown that fadeth not away. Oh! there is nothing but the Gospel that can truly exalt men. Nothing else can break the bondage of sin and Satan—nothing else can give them the franchises of life and heaven. No degree of civilization, of social refinement, of intellectual culture, can save our race. There is no true progression or advancement but in individual evangelization, and conversion. In the midst of all other theories and appliances of human progress, we find the old sins and sorrows, the degeneracies and passions ever returning and asserting their sway, and endeavoring to maintain it in crime, and blood, and woe. The only remedy is in the Cross—in the empire of Christ in human hearts and lives. Men never received such honor as Jesus conferred upon the recipients of his grace. And we must sit at his feet and learn our duty. We must go with him to Bethlehem and Nazareth, to the Sea of Galilee, and the Mount of Transfiguration, to the Upper Room and the Garden, to Calvary and Olivet, and catch anew the inspiration of the Great Commission, and under it bear the message of life to dying men, realizing the honor of such a service in the light of that day when the Judge shall declare: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me."

Oh! it is this missionary work of the Church that is to redeem the world, and usher in the day of millennial joy. The providence and grace of God will coöperate in answering her prayer: "Thy kingdom come!" Even the booming cannon shall do its appointed work, when God directs the ball for the breaking down of the barriers of iniquity and oppression, and contribute to the redeeming of Zion with judgment. But its sound shall at length cease, and under the Gospel the nations learn war no more. The trumpets of salvation shall proclaim the great jubilee—the delightful era when earth's millions shall follow the Redeemer, and death be the bright portal of nations marching to heaven. Golden age of the world, hasten on! Blessed morning of the first resurrection, dawn. The sigh of the captive and the cry of the perishing call for thy coming! Thousands of streaming eyes are watching and waiting for thy radiance to gild the mountain-tops of the distant horizon! And thou art approaching, to satisfy the sufferings of Jesus, to reward the prayers and toils of the Church, and put the crown of honor on the head of our ransomed race.

"Lo! another age is rising—in the coming years I see
Hopes and promises of blessing, light, and love and liberty;
All the good the past hath garnered, all the present yet hath won,
Fade before the glorious future, like the stars before the sun!

"Truth for every eye is shining, in the fullness of that day,
Joy and hope, descended angels, rest, no more to pass away;
Freedom comes, and lifts the captive from the dungeon of his woe,
And all streams of mortal being deeper, purer, sweeter flow.

"There 'the thunder of the captains,' and their shoutings die away,
Melting into love's sweet music, like the darkness into day;
And the chorus of the nations, as the rolling years increase,
Rises in harmonious numbers, peaceful, to the Prince of Peace."

SERMON XXVI.

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CONFOUNDING RIGHT AND WRONG BY GIVING THEM WRONG NAMES.

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil."—ISAIAH 5: 20.

WHAT is there in a name? Is it any thing more than a word?—a word, perhaps, hastily uttered, and when another might have been used just as easily. And then, is it not a mere sound?—an articulate and intelligible sound, to be sure; but one that is uttered, then heard no more, and usually forgotten. And what difference can it make what any thing is called? Is it not the same thing, whatever name it bears, and can a word—a mere breath—change it at all, and make it either better or worse than it was before? As Shakspeare says:

"What's in a name?
A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

And yet the Bible pronounces its woe upon those who merely call certain things by wrong names. It curses such as call good evil, and evil good, as if it were a grievous crime and deserving of the heaviest punishment. Wherein, therefore, consists this sin?—and what makes it such a crime?

The sin, we must suppose, relates to moral good and evil, or to moral distinctions, as we call them, to right and wrong. It is with duty that the Bible especially deals. It is preëminently of what is good for man as a creature of God's, and subject to his law, and of what would bring evil to him in that most important of all relations, that the Scriptures treat; so that if it were unimportant—or comparatively so—what names we give to other things, it may not be so in regard to right and wrong, and all moral dis-

tinctions. And if "a rose would smell as sweet by any other name," goodness might not seem so lovely if we called it sin, nor sin appear half so odious if it bore the name and garb of virtue. These are distinctions that must not be confounded. Their names must not be interchanged. Right must not be called wrong, nor wrong right. This is to unsettle all the foundations of moral obligation. It is to sweep away all the landmarks of duty; or, rather, it is shifting all the buoys and beacons by which we navigate the sea of life, so that instead of warning us of danger, they shall rather draw up upon shoals and rocks. No wonder, therefore, that the Bible says: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil."

Let us, therefore, treat of this subject: **THE GUILT OF CONFOUNDING RIGHT AND WRONG, BY CHANGING THEIR NAMES.**

Names are not mere words. They have a meaning, and a force of meaning, which make them the most efficient instruments we know of. A reproachful word—an opprobrious epithet applied to you, will wound you more severely than a blow. Let one man call another a "coward," or a "villain," and the insult so eats into his soul, that perhaps nothing can check this corrosion save the blood of the slanderer. Let a husband charge his virtuous wife with crime, and if he had accidentally felled her to the floor, or even done it in a fit of passion, he could not have inflicted such a terrible and mortal wound as this has upon her heart. It is only language, it is true; but this language has a meaning and a power in it such as brute force and material agencies can never possess. Free speech is more than a match for the fists and skill of the pugilist. Slander has slain more than the dagger ever did. The press and the discussions of the council-chamber control navies and armies.

How much meaning and force single words have in them! The name of a place suggests to us all that we know, or have conceived of, about that place. The name of a person represents to us all our knowledge and conceptions of that individual's character, and life, and achievements. Thus the solitary word 'Paul' stands for all that Apostle was, and suffered, and accomplished. It represents and suggests to us his rare genius, his quenchless zeal, his fervid piety, his ceaseless toils, his cheerful sufferings, his pre-eminent usefulness, and his death of martyrdom. It is all wrapped up in that single word. And when we speak of our Saviour, and his blessed name, what a fullness of meaning, and what a force of meaning that name has to every Christian heart! "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, or Saviour," said the angel that announced his birth, "for he shall save his people from their sins." And when his saints in their guilt and misery look to him, and in all their conflicts with sin and sorrow, trust in him; and in their final conflict with death, cling to him, and hope to stand accepted

of him in the judgment, and all through faith in his name—is it any wonder that “to them which believe, he is precious”? Is it any wonder that the name of Jesus, or Saviour, should have all this preciousness, when applied to him, though it is but a single word?

And it is not names merely that have great significance and force. The very qualifying words which we use so often and familiarly in ordinary speech, have more or less of this power. Thus when we talk about an upright man, we mean one who carries himself erect and nobly through scenes of peculiar temptation and peril, and who can not be induced to bow down and worship any idol, but only reveres the true God. Or when we speak of a transparent character, we mean one whose motives will bear the closest scrutiny, and whose heart you may hold up as it were to the sunlight, and let the truth shine through it, and yet find nothing to obstruct its passage. Words have all this wealth of meaning—they have all this power in them—and he who thinks because they are words—mere words, as we sometimes call them—that it is of no consequence how they are applied; mistakes entirely their nature and their force.

Words are the representatives of ideas. The word upright represents the ideas which we attach to such a character. The name of Paul stands for the man himself, for his character, and labors, and usefulness. The statement of a fact in language is the expression of our ideas of what exists, or has taken place. The statement of a truth expresses what we conceive to be, and if it is really truth, what is, a correct account of the matter. An abstract proposition expressed in language is something which, if true, corresponds with the reality of things. This is the nature of language. True, it is all words—syllables—breath; still, as the representative of ideas, thoughts, conceptions upon every subject, it is just as valuable as thoughts and ideas are. And if these ideas are just and true, it is worth just as much as truth is. Or, if they are false, it becomes just as injurious as error and falsehood are. And it is just as necessary that language should be used aright as it is that it should teach truth rather than falsehood and error. And when it is wrongly used and misapplied, it is just as great a calamity as it is to have falsehood and error taught. And he who misapplies language thus, disseminates falsehood and error, and is guilty of the crime, and deserves the curse of such: “Their word will eat, as doth a canker,” like the teachings of Hymeneus and Philetus. And of such it may be said, as the Apostle said of the false preachers of his day: “If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

Here then we begin to see what the sin of changing the names of right and wrong, and calling good evil, and evil good, consists in.

1. It confounds moral distinctions and perplexes one in regard to his duty. It makes that seem right which is wrong, and that seem wrong which is right. They are made to change names. It is as if Judas was introduced to you under the name of Paul, and Paul by the name of Judas. You might suspect something wrong; you probably would soon feel that your conceptions of this Prince of Apostles were hardly realized by that arch hypocrite, even though he bore his name; still it would be enough to confuse you, and so far as you gave him your confidence, and respect, and veneration, that would go to Judas, which rightfully belongs only to Paul. It would at least perplex you, and make you dissatisfied with one whom you had hitherto conceived of as the world's noblest and best saint. Or, take the word "religion" as it is misapplied in Catholic countries. With us it means piety, the fear and love of God, heartfelt reverence for his character, and sincere devotion to his Son. It has special reference to the heart, and he who has not a truly pious heart, we do not regard as having any religion. But religion with a Catholic is very much a matter of forms and ceremonies and ritual observances. He is said to be "religious," not who has sincere and hearty reverence for God, and penitence for his sins, and faith in the Saviour; but who is careful to observe the forms and practice the ceremonies, and conform to all the ritual of the Church. He is said to be a "religious person," not who acknowledges and feels his obligations to love God, and do good to his fellow-men; but who has taken upon him the vows, and is subject to the rules of one of the monastic orders. A "religious house," is not a Christian family, where husband and wife are "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," like Zacharias and Elizabeth, and "training up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" but a family of monks or nuns, who are under vows of celibacy, and subject to the rules of St. Benedict, or St. Theresa. And is it any wonder that when this is called religion, and exhibited to the people under this name, so many in those countries should either despise it as all priestcraft and a fraud, or else fail to find either comfort or joy in it, notwithstanding their strictest observance of all the requirements of the Church? It must perplex, if it does not deceive them, to have things called by such wrong names, especially in matters pertaining to religion. It is religion when seen aright, that is appreciated and admired, if at all; and not when so misrepresented and reduced to outward forms and mechanical observances.

2. But it not only perplexes men—it deceives and misleads them; to have right and wrong confounded, and called by wrong names; to call formality piety, when there is no piety except of the heart, and they who worship God at all, must "worship him in spirit and in truth," is to mislead one. To call that Christianity,

and teach for "the doctrines of God, the commandments of men," is to deceive men. The Jews might as well have been told that some anti-Christ was the true Christ, and been taught to worship and serve him as such. When our Saviour appeared among the Jews, there had already appeared many others who had claimed to be the Messiah. They assumed the name, and professed to have all the prophecies of the Old Testament fulfilled in themselves. What if that name had been permanently attached to one of them, and he had been generally received as the world's Messiah, instead of Jesus of Nazareth; what a fearful deception had been practiced upon mankind! If Mohammed could have been palmed upon the world as the world's Saviour, instead of our Redeemer, what a fraud it had been! If Mohammedanism, with its sensual tastes and bloody spirit, had been accepted as true religion, instead of the pure and loving faith of the Gospel—how dark the prospects of mankind had become long before this! Make error pass current under the name of truth, and sin claim respect under the guise of purity and holiness; and men are deceived, and misled, and ruined, in the mass, and there is small hope of saving any of them.

We easily deceive ourselves with names. If we wish to believe any thing, we call it truth, whether it is so or not. If we wish to think well of any thing, we call it good, however bad it may be. We can not respect vice, if we try; nor can we believe in falsehood. But we can give them both better names, and so receive them into our respect and esteem. We never could receive an unmitigated villain into our confidence and friendship in his true character; but how easy it is to overlook his corrupt principles and palliate his vices, and admit that he possesses all the excellencies to which he lays claim, and under this assumed name of a man of worth, grant him admission to our hearts and homes. We never could embrace a gross system of error in its naked repulsiveness; but it is easy enough to conceal the grossest features of the system and persuade one's self that it has a desirableness and worth such as truth alone can possess. Call falsehood truth, and wrong right, and it is easy enough to make yourself think that you are only believing what is true, and doing what is right, when you are falling into the grossest error and the deepest sin. This is the secret of self-deception. Call "evil good," and it is easy enough to embrace the greatest error, or to commit the grossest crime.

And in this too, consists the art of deceiving others. Call bad things by good names, if you wish them to find favor. Call religious error the true doctrine and orthodoxy, if you wish to have it pass current. Call vices justifiable practices, or innocent indulgences, if you want them to be allowed. Transform Satan into an angel of light, if you would have him admired and adored. At

least call him an angel, and try to make people think he is one, and if you can persuade them that such is his true character, they may bow down and worship him, but not without. In this consists the skill of every successful errorist. He can dress up error in the garb of truth; he gives it the name of truth, and arrays it in the garments of truth, and so arranges that drapery about it, and gathers it in here, and lets it flow loosely there, as to hide this deformity, and make it seem to have that grace, until it passes under the name it bears. In this, too, consists the skill of every corrupter of public morals. He calls vice by some innocent name, and makes her talk of love and harmless enjoyment, and wreathes her face in roses and smiles, until she passes for the lovely maiden whose name she bears. And no wonder she finds admirers. But strip her of her finery, and show her to the community the hag she is, and she meets only with the detestation she deserves.

This putting up guide-boards along the journey of life, professing to show you the right way, and having them marked wrong, and just as wrong as they can be, and telling you this is "the strait and narrow way that leadeth unto life," when it is in fact "the broad way that leadeth to destruction," is with those who have any faith in such directions, the surest way to destroy them. And to make out a chart for yourself, with which to prosecute the voyage of life, and because you wish to sail along those verdant shores, to call those shoals deep water, or when you prefer to put out to sea, to mark that ledge of sunken rocks as fathoms deep—is to set sail for destruction. To be safe, your chart must represent the sea as it is, and not as you would like to have it. And to guide others aright, and not lead them astray in their journeyings, the roads must correspond with the directions given, and truth, not falsehood, must point out the way.

It is doing mischief on a grand scale, and doing it most effectually, to confound right and wrong, and give them false names. It is calling irreligion piety, and having it revered and practiced as if it were such. It is regarding Mohammedanism, or any other false religion, as Christianity, and giving it such claims to our faith. It is calling Satan Christ, and loving and trusting in him as our Saviour. Well might the prophet pronounce a curse upon such—"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil."

And now we are prepared to see how right and wrong are confounded by changing their names, and this "woe" is incurred.

1. We slander one another by giving false names to each other's acts; we call that pride which is only dignity; we deem that parsimony which is nothing but economy; we say one is skeptical and perhaps infidel, because he is fond of investigation and discussion, and not willing to receive any thing as the teaching of the Bible, except as it is plainly taught there; we charge another

with being a bigot, when he only loves the truth of God, and dares not surrender it; we charge men perhaps with being hypocrites, when God knows that they are sincere and for the most part conscientious and exemplary Christians, though they have certain striking faults. In such cases we give others a false name. If the name was truly applied to them, they might deserve all the contempt and reproaches which it excites against them. But their good is called evil, and they are despised and made to suffer accordingly.

2. In like manner we deceive ourselves in respect to our own character and conduct. We call ourselves firm, when we are only obstinate. We think we are conscientious, when we are only willful. We call that a sense of justice in our hearts, which is the bitterest revenge. We consider ourselves, perhaps, as "doing good service" in opposing the views of others, and destroying their influence, when in reality we are actuated by malice, and just as much fighting against God's truth, and persecuting his saints, as ever Paul was. And we do it by giving our conduct and motives wrong names, and thus sanctifying what has nothing but sin in it, and what can never stand the disclosures and siftings of the final day.

3. Men relieve their consciences by giving to their actions false names. Their forgetfulness of God and guilty indifference to all his claims and all his commands, they style only thoughtlessness. Their wickedness and even gross vice they call only gayety. Their cheatings and their fraud they laugh over as only keenness and shrewdness. Their deceptions and lies and mean trickery, to carry their point, they speak of as nothing but good management, and as justified by the object that was accomplished by them. If they could see such conduct just as it is, in all its baseness and guilt, they would be ashamed of it and feel guilty. And call it by its right name, and they would see it in its true character; but by disguising it under a false name, it is admired and commended, instead of being despised and condemned. It is such false names that deceive conscience, and make it spare its reproaches and remorse, when we so much deserve them.

4. The standard of public morals is lowered, and the community is corrupted, by giving decent names to gross sins, (mild names.) In the grossest age of English morals, courtesy toward women, the arts of seduction, and power to fascinate and destroy, were termed "gallantry;" as if to do this successfully was to be high-bred and accomplished and gentlemanly, when it was nothing more nor less than systematic licentiousness and studied villainy. In the rural districts of England now, a child born out of wedlock is called a "love-child;" as if the offspring of lust and lawless passion were more the creature of affection than if born of honest and virtuous parents, instead of being the mere bastard that it is.

In Italy, when poisoning was the most common there, those who were killed in this way were not said to be murdered, but their death was spoken of as "assisted." And in France, the subtle poison by which impatient heirs removed those who stood in the way to their inheritance, was called the "powder of succession." In our day and country, a man who steals a few dollars' worth of property, or a few shillings from a merchant's till, is called a thief, and regarded as such; while he who robs the Government or a corporation of thousands and hundreds of thousands, is styled a defaulter, and perhaps continues to hold up his head among honest men. Take the subject which is convulsing our nation now, and it has a complete set of fair names under which it seeks to conceal its real character, and justify its conduct to the world. Slavery is "our domestic institution," and slaves are "our servants;" revolution is "secession," and traitors are "seceders;" the enforcement of law is "coercion," and the punishment of rebels "civil war" and the "subjugation of independent States." There is a bitter mockery about this whole subject, or rather there would be, if it was not so evidently honest and sincere. The support of slavery and the oppression of their fellow-men, is the "maintenance of their rights," and the extension of slavery is "extending the area of freedom;" invasion and rapine and robbery, is "peaceful colonization," and conquest is "annexation." This must be done, to have such things sanctioned or tolerated; for the moment you call such things by their right names, and as Christianity calls them, that moment all will view them essentially alike, and feel alike in regard to them. And there is no better way of reforming a corrupted public sentiment than by giving vices and crimes their true names. Call stealing, "stealing," and oppression, "oppression," as the Bible does, if you would bring men back to the Bible standard of duty.

Be not deceived, then, by names. Receive not that as right which calls itself such, unless it is really such; nor believe that to be truth which goes by that name, unless it is such in reality. Names are worth nothing if what they represent is worthless or injurious. All is not Christianity which goes under the name of it. All are not prophets who come in the name of the Lord. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

And do not deceive yourself by giving things wrong names. Do not deem yourself a Christian because you bear the Christian name. Do not think yourself truly pious because you pray and read your Bible and come to church. Do not think well of your professions, and confessions, and activities, and humilities, and charities, and raptures, unless you are quite sure that they are sincere and heartfelt, and springing from the love of Christ as their

root. Nor think yourself innocent of sin—and, perhaps, great sin—because you call your conduct by some fair name. Pride is sin, though you call it self-respect and dignity; covetousness is sin, though you call it economy; deception and fraud are sin, though you call them shrewdness and good management; stealing is sin, though called by a softer name, and you can do it lawfully, or it is justified by custom. If such things will not bear to be called by their right names and seen just as they are, and to have others see them just as God regards them, you may depend upon it, there is something wrong about them; and you are imposing upon yourself when you try to think they are right.

And do not attempt to practice such imposition upon others. It is bad enough to deceive yourself, but worse, if any thing, to deceive another. "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." To teach some humble and confiding soul that falsehood is truth, and that wrong is right; to take that feeble one by the hand, and offer to lead him to heaven and salvation, and set him in the broad way to destruction, when he thinks it is the narrow way to life, and send him forward to stumble on over rocks and pitfalls, and through darkness and danger, until he plunges at last into the bottomless abyss—there is no crime like this, and none deserves such a curse. If those denunciations of the Hebrew law were just, "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's landmarks; and all the people shall say, Amen!" and, "Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way; and all the people shall say, Amen!" a still heavier curse must light on that man who deceives his brother, to lead him into sin and on to ruin.

Learn, then, to call things by their right names—not that you should publicly, and in all places, and at all times speak of every thing and every body just as they are; not that you are to be publishing to the world every villain that you know of, or telling every body of all the misdeeds that you have discovered. This might be as needless and as cruel as it would be mischievous. Where duty does not call you to make such disclosures, Christian compassion would forbid it; but where duty requires it—duty to the community; duty to those who are ruining themselves by their self-deceptions; duty to truth and righteousness, and to the God of both—then set things in their right light, and hold them there, till all shall see them as they are, call them just what God calls them in his word. Show them to be the very sins which he condemns, and against which his law thunders its penalty. And make his voice speak so distinctly, if you can, and his law thun-

der so loudly, that nobody can fail to hear it or to understand it. And, especially, be honest with yourself, and call things by their right names, when you are looking at them as matters of personal duty. Let not your prejudices blind you, nor your passions mislead you, when you are called upon to choose the path that you will travel. Calling it the right way when it is the wrong, will not make it any the safer. Setting up a false guide-board, and calling it the right road, the shortest and the best, to the pleasant home you seek, will not bring you there, when it is all a deception and a lie, and sure to lead you into trouble, if you trust in it. But listen to the voice of God, and when you hear him say, "This is the way—walk ye in it," and will obey that voice, you may be sure you are safe. What if it is a narrow way, and leads over rough places and down through dark ravines; what if it is not half so pleasant and inviting as that broad way where so many walk—still it is the only road that leads to heaven and to God; and any other will be sure to lead you astray to your ruin. Walk in the right way, the true path, and it will finally bring you to that land of light and peace and perfectness to which He who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" is guiding you.

SERMON XXVII.

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THE BELIEVER'S JOYFUL LOVE TO AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."—1 PETER 1 : 8, 9.

THE Apostle Peter was one of that inner circle of friends—"Peter, James and John"—who were favored with our Lord's most intimate acquaintance and most constant company. They were with him when none others could remain; as on the Mount of Transfiguration, where they alone beheld his glory, and again in the garden, in that hour of bitterness and exceeding sorrow even unto death. This was a dear privilege; and that it was accounted so, is manifest from the affectionate and grateful mention of it made in the letters of these apostles. Indeed, the twelve are sometimes spoken of as those who had seen Christ—that was one of the qualifications of their office—and in our text, Peter intimates

that it was an abundant reason why in propriety they should, and why in reality they did love his sacred person. It is spoken of, as a distinct and remarkable feature in the experience of those dispersed Christians to whom he wrote, that having not seen Christ, they yet loved him. Was, then, the mere sight and company of Jesus enough to elicit love? Undoubtedly it should have been so. Whatever form he may have worn—whether of manly beauty and majestic presence, or of deformity and ugliness—the mild and loving and benignant spirit that inhabited it must surely have shone out, and drawn toward itself, by an attraction conveyed through sight alone, the warm affection of every ingenuous heart; while the wonderfully gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, and the good deeds of kindness and of sympathy which his hands performed, must have made it almost impossible to deny him the homage of love. No wonder—does it not seem so to us?—that those who saw our blessed Saviour, loved him.

But, my dear hearers, if we suppose that the circumstances of those who surrounded the person of Christ, and watched his features, and heard the intonation of his voice, were really more favorable to the creation and exercise of that love to him which is the very essence of pure religion, than are ours, we are in error. Look at the facts. How was it that, of all the multitudes that hung upon his lips, and saw his miracles of mercy, and even beheld his tears, the great mass turned away again, some careless, some contemptuous, some filled with bitter hatred? How was it that, at the time he ascended in his human nature to that heaven whence he came, he did not number, as far as we can gather from the history, so many true disciples, as there are stars in the triumphal crown of an humble but faithful servant of his in the gospel ministry? There was no saving virtue in the sight of Christ. Judas saw him; the Jews who cried out, "Crucify him! away with him! crucify him!" saw him; but the one has gone to his own place, and if some of the others were converted and saved, it was after the crucified Saviour was removed out of their sight. And how was it, too, that the love even of the apostles grew more ardent and intense after he was taken up into the opening heavens from their very eyes, than it was when he walked with them on earth? If this does not show us that the sight of Jesus, as a man, like other men in the circumstances of his being, was unfavorable to the growth and exercise of that adoring love which we owe him as our divine Redeemer, it at least should teach us not to covet the apostles' privilege. No, my hearers, faith is above sight; and faith is ours.

There have been enemies to the cause of Christ, who, by plausible arguments, have attempted to prove that love to an unseen Saviour is impossible; so absurd a falsehood as hardly to require refutation. Sight is not of itself the foundation or cause of any

affection to be dignified by the name of love. We do not love that which merely strikes the eye—beauty of configuration or coloring; we only admire. The only way in which sight can have any thing to do with the inspiration of genuine heart-affection is by catching the expression of those inner qualities of the soul that are adapted to excite it. And this it does very imperfectly. It was not by sight that you learned the character of your friend so as to esteem and love him for its excellence: it was by conversation and communion with him, by correspondence, and especially by observation of his daily life and his conduct under peculiarly trying circumstances. And do we not know our blessed Saviour? Have we not ample facilities—in some respects more abundant than they had who saw him in the flesh—for becoming acquainted with his excellence? We have a fuller revelation of his will than they had; and one which seems perfectly adapted to give us a knowledge of his lovely character. It comes to us well attested, and with an imperative claim upon our attention and belief; while the great subject of its promise and prophecy, its description and its eulogy, is, Christ Jesus—the object of our love. From the delineations of the rapt Isaiah and the simple stories of the Gospel, we know him as he walked on earth, as far as men need know; it would not add a whit to our useful information to see him with these bodily eyes. From the inspired assurances of the Epistles and the gorgeous descriptions of the Revelation, we know him as he reigns and shines above, with his tender heart still full of human sympathies.

And besides this blessed book, we have other sources of knowledge. The works of nature—the creations of his hand—are ever telling of his wisdom, power, and goodness; are ever acquainting us with his glorious excellence, and exciting to his love. Oh! how dull we are to take the rich discoveries that nature makes of Christ—how blind to read this glowing eloquent volume of his knowledge and praise! But have we not learned something of him thus, and felt our affection warmed and deepened by the gentle and persuasive teachings of the earth and sky, the forest and flower? The proper study of external nature must enrich the mind with precious knowledge of the Saviour; and if our love be thus drawn out more pure and glowing, that love shall throw a new glory over the same scenes, and reiterate and double their instructive lessons.

Is there nothing in your experience, my brethren, that answers in some degree to the following of the heavenly Edwards? "God's excellence, his wisdom, his purity, his love, seemed to appear in every thing; in the sun and moon and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance; and in the day spent much time in

viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things; in the mean time singing forth, with a low voice, my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer. As I was walking, and looking up on the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together; it was a sweet and gentle and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high and great and holy gentleness."

Thus Nature, with her thousand tongues, speaks to the soul that waits to hear, and opens the subject of the Saviour's matchless perfections. Have you learned him thus, my brethren, and loved him as you learned? What matter, then, though we see him not with our bodily eyes; may we not know him fully by his word and works, "whom, having not seen, we love?"

The history of the Church, which is the body of Christ, is another continuous revelation of his character, more perfect now, of course, than in any former age. Just as you learn the temper of your friend by marking the methods which he uses in governing his household and managing his business, you may read the heart of our Saviour, by interpreting his dealings with the Church. Its history is, in one view of it, but the record of his government; and his government is the true expression of his character.

But our most intimate and personal knowledge of the Redeemer is obtained by personal experience and by the revelation of the Holy Ghost to our hearts. Has he not given us pardon, my dear brethren, rescued us from the slavery of sin and Satan, and introduced us into his own glorious kingdom? In the night of our deepest sorrow and distress, has not he arisen upon our souls like the glad dawn? In the dark storm of wrath and fear that tossed us on its bewildering waves, was it not his voice that commanded, "Peace, be still"? Have we not, as it were, felt the throbbings of his faithful heart, and received from his very hand supplies of grace, comfort, and strength, just suited to our case? What if we have not seen him, therefore? We know his excellency, the power of his grace, the efficacy of his blood, the prevalence of his intercession; we have enjoyed his communion, sat with him at his own table and listened to his heavenly discourse. Above all, the Spirit hath taken of the things of Christ, and shown them unto us. We know not the manner of that blessed agent's operation; but we know that it is a most sweet and precious reality. Sometimes he takes a passage of Scripture descriptive of the Saviour, that has been dark, uninteresting, and commonplace before; opens it suddenly, as one would touch the secret spring of a casket, and lo! what a volume of meaning—how much it tells of Christ—how it places him before the mental eye in more than the brightness and distinctness of sensible presence! How often upon a bed of

anguish, and in the valley of the shadow of death itself, has the Spirit made such a clear and precious revelation of Jesus to the afflicted saint as made him forget all his pain, and think himself within the gate of heaven! There was no visible Saviour before his eyes; but his soul saw him, and was full of the knowledge of his love; the beatitudes of the upper Paradise, the glorious scenery of heaven seemed opening before him! Every true Christian thus knows the Saviour, and loves him, though unseen.

The absurd notion that one can not love an invisible Redeemer, puts out of the way entirely the idea of faith. Why, faith takes the place of sight—yea, more than fills that place—as a means of knowledge; it is the very substance of things hoped for, and the evidence, the demonstration of things not seen. And this faith immediately works by love. I suppose that the most tender and confidential love is only inspired by a sense of love; it must be reciprocal, to be perfect. Now the thing, distinctive and preëminent, which faith reveals concerning Christ, is his love for us. The believer is made to see that his Saviour entertains a strong and quenchless affection for him; that his humiliation, obedience, agony, and crucifixion, are all expressions of it; that it is therefore stronger than death. This it is that excites the answering glow in his breast: "We love him because he first loved us."

Happy for you, my brethren, if you can say as Peter did once, and with all the confidence he felt: "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Examine yourselves of this to-day. Have your hearts been going out towards your unseen Saviour, as you have heard mention made of his name, his person, and his love? Or if he should now appear in the midst of us, should you be obliged to hang your heads in conscious shame at the decline of your affection? Yet be not driven from his embrace. Go to him with what love you have; confess your fault ingenuously, and then whisper in his ear this prayer: Lord, shed abroad thy love in my heart. Let us not be utterly discouraged because our faith is so small; if it be as a grain of mustard-seed, it is a great thing; but see that it be so in all respects—not small only, but also living and growing.

But our text speaks of joy as well as love: "In whom though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." They must be spoken of together, for they always exist together. Indeed, the connection is so necessary and evident that the words have come mutually to imply each other in our apprehension. Who ever thinks of a love which does not convey satisfaction and delight? And who ever imagines that genuine happiness can be enjoyed where the pure affections of the heart have no exercise? Joy is therefore one of the fruits of the Spirit, the attendant upon love. Though it be not the root or germ of religion, nor yet the sure evidence of it, it is the legi-

timate fruit. Wherever there exists true faith and love to Christ, there must be, to some extent or other, happiness and delight in him. And this is just in proportion to the purity and simplicity of our confidence and affection. As these graces flourish and increase, the Christian passes into a higher region of enjoyment; and when they reasonably fill his heart and command all his powers, bringing into subjection every earthly desire and principle, he breathes the clear, pure atmosphere, and walks the delightful gardens and terraces of "joy unspeakable and full of glory." He who can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," has a well-spring of pleasure within his soul, whose waters, clear and exhaustless, are the same as those that flow along sparkling in the river of life above. What, my brother, is that most dear and precious treasure yours? Have you property in Christ? And not only so, but actual possession and tenure? Are you really receiving from his infinite fullness? Is it your blessed privilege, not only to have a right in him, but also to have the present enjoyment of him, to be taken into his covenant and communion? Is his swelling heart of love yours; and is the answering, ecstatic glow enkindled in your breast? Thrice-happy man! this must be joy unspeakable and full of glory. I'd rather have an hour's enjoyment of this hope, and love, and rapture, than a lifetime of earthly and sensual delights, or an age of merely intellectual and æsthetic pleasure! This is the privilege of every humblest believer; and if he now enjoys it not, it is only because he does not keep himself in the love of his Saviour: that is it which opens the soul to the experience of these joys. Where is the mourning disciple, that I may chide him for his gloom? What aileth thee, my brother, that thou art sad? Dost thou love an unseen Saviour, and possess his love? Why, then, walk in that love and joy; recall your privileges; count over your treasures; lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees! All Christ is, is yours, and all he has; all he has done, and all that he is doing; all he has promised in the Gospel, all he has prepared in heaven—all are yours. Himself the richest and divinest treasure—in all the plenitude of his outgushing love and tenderness—himself is yours; yours to keep, guide, protect, strengthen, comfort, and save you. Be not faithless, therefore, but believing; be not despondent, but glad and joyous. Rejoice, for your redemption is both sure and near. Said Jesus: "In this rejoice, not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." And where is he who accuses religion of being in its nature a gloomy thing? O my friend! thou art most miserably wrong: Satan is befooling thee. Is it a gloomy thing to have the company, and experience the love of so tender and sympathizing a friend as Christ—one altogether lovely in his character, faithful to his attachments, able to enter into all your

most secret feelings, and to relieve and comfort you in all your circumstances? Our love to him can never be so deep and strong that it shall not be more than fully, perfectly returned; and pure love reciprocated constitutes the highest felicity; it is a drop from the water of life that flows unceasingly above. Is it a gloomy thing to have in the omnipotent Immanuel perfect security from the second death, from fatal harm, from fiendish enemies, from every thing that can destroy our real good? Why, it is absurd. If you truly believed that Christ died for you; that you have an interest in his love; that he is pledged for your complete salvation; that he is able to rescue you from every danger, and bear you conqueror through—would you not rejoice and be exceeding glad? Your joy would be complex, ecstatic, and intense. There would be the joy of returned affection; the joy of fixed, immovable security; the joy of triumphant victory; the joy of rapt expectation: for it doth not yet appear what we shall be; the joy unspeakable and full of glory—yea, glorified, covered with the very glory of heaven! This is what fills and beatifies the soul, enabling it to take pleasure even in trials and persecutions, that the power of Christ may rest upon it; to exult even at the approach of the king of terrors; to rise from the river of death, shake the black waters from its glancing plume, and dart upward to the abode of God! Religion a gloomy thing! Bring hither your boasted worldly delights, accumulate all earth-born joys, and see how they will look beside the pleasures of religion. Tell me now, of which of these can you say, it is a “joy unspeakable and full of glory”? Ah! the very phrase is a touchstone: you can not appropriate it; it would look strange in any other book than this; you can not utter it in connection with any other subject than the love of Christ. But do you say, this is all very well for the theory; let us come to the practice; let us compare the facts? And do you urge that Christians do not seem to enjoy themselves much more than other men; that they have their troubles like other men? Of outward ills we do not speak; these do befall us every one; and of his inward joys you must allow the Christian himself to speak. You do not know his holy pleasures, but he has tried your carnal delights. Now what says he? One hour’s communion with an unseen Saviour, he will tell you, is more soul-satisfying than all the joys of earth. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Heart-sores and afflictions, he will admit he has; but they do not spring from his religion, only from its decline; they are compensated a hundred-fold by positive and present satisfaction; and beyond all, his highest, purest pleasures are all in reserve, unspeakable and full of glory. Now, how is it with you? You are ever chasing happiness and never finding her; your choicest pleasures pall upon the sense; they die not only, but they sting as they

expire, and leave you empty, miserable, pursuing yet. And then, my dear friend, while we admit that no Christian here is so happy as he might be, ought to be, you often misread his steady, sober, almost sad and solemn deportment; that often is an index of the sweetest and most settled peace. The love of Christ affords a deep and permanent and calm enjoyment—an unutterable tranquillity, far above transient pleasure. Very different this—and in the same degree superior to it—very different this from the noisy rapture and boisterous excitement which you sometimes express. Pure, soul-filling happiness is a calm, almost a sober thing. Like the deep and powerful river that glides majestic, swift and still along its polished bed, the peace that Christ gives flows on in full volume through the heart. It is the shallow stream that brawls and gurgles. Loud laughter betokens a light joy, and often an empty heart. Oh! it is sad to think how much of this world's gayety and merriment is forced, hollow, miserable, mad—like the scream of a maniac amid the tombs! Do not, then, misread the Christian's quiet mien. If he lives on his religion as he should, he has hidden deep in his heart, and often gushing forth in secret acts of kindness and genuine benevolence, a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; which is not bought with gold, nor enticed by honors, nor allured by pleasure, but which flows freely from the love and communion of an unseen Saviour. And all this felicity, my dear friends, may be yours by simple faith in Christ and new obedience. Will ye not cease, then, from the broken cisterns ye have been vainly digging now so long, and come to this fountain of joy? For every sinful pleasure foregone, I promise you a hundred purer and richer; for every attractive, but vicious friend disowned, I promise you the communion of saints—yea, of angels and our blessed Lord himself. And if, on fair experiment, you find religion indeed a gloomy thing, then go back to the beggarly element of the world. If you fear that heaven would be a dark and dreary place, will you try the raptures of hell?

What! does the Christian not only believe and love and rejoice, but now receive the end of his faith, even salvation? Yes, my brethren, we are saved if we believe in Christ. We have not only the infallible assurance of complete salvation, but in all its essential elements it is already begun. We now sit together in heavenly places. It was to a band of believers on earth that the Apostle said: "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Why, there were, in the Hebrew Church, weeping, sorrowing, struggling

disciples, just as there are among you, my brethren ; but yet, hear how Paul addresses them : Well, we are all one family in Christ : Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. We have an equal right to the privileges and immunities of heaven ; but some have them in partial, others in complete enjoyment. Many of Jerusalem's citizens are yet on this side death. Some have crossed the flood, and some are crossing now ; but they are all citizens. We do, therefore, even now receive the end of our faith—not only in its promise and assurance, but in its earnest and partial possession. O my brethren ! there are moments, sweet moments, when we do not seem to believe so much as actually to see and know and feel : then, indeed, we seem to receive the end of our faith, to catch the harmony of heaven, and add our voices to its full, triumphant swell !

But, to guard this subject, I have to remark, in conclusion, that the Christian's joy, though unspeakable and full of glory, is no extravagant, momentary ecstasy, to which he works himself up by effort and excitement. It is the simple, natural effect of seeing Christ and confiding in him. It will be just as permanent and steady as is the vision of the Saviour. When some sin intervenes between the soul and him, the joy will at once decline ; when the shadow is gone, it will beam forth again. This, then, is what distinguishes it from enthusiasm. It is produced spontaneously by right and scriptural views of the truth as it is in Jesus. And be assured, dear brethren, that if our faith and love and joy be the genuine, deep seated experience of which I have spoken, they will evidence themselves in steady and consistent action. By their fruits, therefore, after all, ye shall know them.